

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NAPLES 141

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: POL, IT

SUBJECT: GENERAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN SOUTHERN ITALY

IN DECEMBER, SEVEN MONTHS AFTER ASSUMING CHARGE I FELT I HAD TAKEN THE MEASURE OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE CONSULAR DISTRICT AND SUBMITTED A REPORT TO THE AMBASSADOR. ITALY IS GOING THROUGH AN ECON-POL CRISIS WHICH COULD HAVE SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS AND I AM THEREFORE CONVERTING THE REPORT TO A TELEGRAM SO THAT INTERESTED OFFICERS CAN USE IT AS A POINT OF REFERENCE FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS DISTRICT.

QUOTE: I HAVE NOW VISITED VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE MAIN CITIES AND PROVINCES IN THE CONSULAR DISTRICT. AFTER CAREFUL REVIEW OF THE POLITICAL-ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE SOUTH, I BELIEVE I AM ABLE TO DRAW A FEW OBSERVATIONS WHICH HOLD FOR THE DISTRICT IN GENERAL, WITH

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THE EXCEPTION OF THE CITY OF NAPLES, WHICH IS A SPECIAL CASE.

THE DC IN PUGLIA, BASILICATA, AND CALABRIA IS CHARACTERIZED BY A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF INTERNAL WARFARE BETWEEN OPPOSITION GROUPS, LED BY SOME NEW, ATTRACTIVE LEADERS, AND THE ENTRENCHED OLD GUARD. IN MY OPINION, A DEGREE OF INTRA-PARTY STRIFE CAN ACTUALLY SERVE TO STRENGTHEN THE DC POSITION BY PROVIDING THE APPEARANCE, IF NOT IN

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EVERY CASE THE REALITY, OF REVITALIZATION AND REJUVENATION.

ANOTHER PHENOMENON WORTHY OF NOTE IS THE SUCCESS THE PSI HAS HAD IN GAINING POSITIONS FOR ITS COUNCILORS ON REGIONAL, CITY AND PROVINCIAL GIUNTAS IN A PROPORTION ENTIRELY OUT OF KEEPING WITH ITS ELECTORAL STRENGTH OF 12 . THE PSI TENDS TO ACT IN CONCERT WITH THE DC AND I AM CONVINCED THEIR FEAR OF BEING SWALLOWED UP BY THE COMMUNISTS WILL MAINTAIN AND PROMOTE THIS ALIGNMENT.

NAPLES, AS I HAVE POINTED OUT, IS A SPECIAL CASE, IN LARGE PART DUE TO YEARS OF THE GROSSEST MALADMINISTRATION. THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS FACING THE CITY ARE APPALLING AND, TO PUT IT BLUNTLY THE CITY IS BEYOND REDEMPTION. A BRIEF REGION BY REGION RUNDOWN FOLLOWS:

CALABRIA - AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL, THE CALABRESE TAKE PRIDE IN POINTING OUT THAT THEIR REGION IS THE ONLY ONE IN WHICH THE COMMUNISTS

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FAILED TO REGISTER ANY NOTABLE GAINS. AS A RESULT CENTER-LEFT GIUNTAS RULE THE REGION AS WELL AS REGGIO AND CATANZARO. COSENZA HAS C I-PSI-PSDI CITY AND PROVINCIAL GIUNTAS BUT THIS IS ATTRIBUTABLE IN LARGE MEASURE TO ITS BEING MANCINI'S HOME BASE AND THE EXISTENCE HERE OF A UNIVERSITY WHICH IS STAFFED BY A FACULTY DOMINATED BY LEFTIST PROFESSORS.

RUGGED MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN CHARACTERIZES THE REGION AND THIS LIMITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES TO CONSTRUCTION OF TOURIST FACILITIES ALONG THE LONG SHORELINE AND FORESTATION OF A LARGE PLATEAU CALLED LA SILA. THE GOI PROMISED TO BUILD A STEEL MILL AT GIOIA TAURO TO ASSUAGE THE POPULATION WHEN LABOR STRIFE OCCURRED IN 1971, BUT LITTLE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE. THE PROJECT WOULD PROVE UNECONOMICAL AND DISPLACE ABOUT 3,000 PEOPLE WHO MAKE THEIR LIVING FROM THRIVING OLIVE GROVES. IT IS BEST FORGOTTEN. THE CONSTRUCTION OF TOURIST FACILITIES APPEARS TO BE ECONOMICALLY FEASIBLE AND SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT ON A MODEST SCALE--AND PREFERABLY BY PRIVATE RATHER THAN PUBLIC FUNDS. FORESTATION OF THE FERTILE LA SILA WOULD BE COSTLY AND IS HIGHLY QUESTIONABLE FOR THAT VERY REASON.

BASILICATA - AS IN THE CASE OF CALABRIA THE 650,000 CITIZENS IN THIS MOUNTAINOUS REGION SCRAPE THEIR LIVING FROM THE POOR LAND AND

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SOME MODEST INDUSTRIES. THEY SUBSIST BASICALLY ON THE COHESION OF FAMILY LIFE AND FAITH IN GOD. BEING REPRESENTED IN ROME BY NATIONAL LEADERS SUCH AS TREASURY SECRETARY COLOMBO HAS HELPED IN GETTING FUNDS FOR ROADS AND OTHER SMALL ECONOMIC VENTURES. THE REGION IN MY JUDGMENT WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE CENTER-LEFT GIUNTAS FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. AT PRESENT THE BASISTA FACTION OF THE DC HAS

ARTICULATE OLD AND YOUNG ACTIVISTS WHO ARE GENUINELY ATTEMPTING TO REVITALIZE AND REJUVENATE THE PARTY. THE BASISTI ARE ALSO AGITATING FOR GOI APPROVAL OF LAND DEVELOPMENT AND IRRIGATION PROJECTS TO HELP THE REGION. BY PRESSING FOR AND OBTAINING ASSESSORSHIPS ON THE VARIOUS GIUNTAS, THE PSI HAS PLACED ITSELF IN A POSITION TO IMPROVE ITS VOTE-GETTING ABILITY BY AT LEAST TWO PERCENTAGE POINTS. THE BALANCE OF THE POLITICAL LINEUP HOWEVER IS NOT LIKELY TO CHANGE MATERIALLY.

PUGLIA - NOTWITHSTANDING A RECESSION WHICH AFFLICTS ALL OF ITALY, PUGLIA IS FAIRING AS WELL AS COULD BE EXPECTED POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY. THE REGION IS BLESSED WITH A FERTILE PLAIN AND 200 MILES OF BEAUTIFUL COASTLINE. IT IS THE HOME OF PRIME MINISTER MORO WHOSE IMAGE IS ON THE UPGRADE AFTER A LACKLUSTER PERFORMANCE IN THE 1972 POLITICAL ELECTION. AT THAT TIME THE VOTERS FELT THAT HE HAD

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BECOME TOO INVOLVED IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS AND WAS NEGLECTING HIS OWN BACKYARD. HERE, AS IN THE CASE OF CALABRIA AND BASILICATA, NEWCOMERS ARE CHALLENGING THE PREMIER'S SUPREMACY, BUT THIS ALSO REPRESENTS A HEALTHY TREND FOR THE DC.

CAMPANIA - WITH LEFTIST GIUNTAS FOR THE CITY AND PROVINCE OF NAPLES, THIS IS THE ONLY AREA ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE JUNE 15 COMMUNIST GAINS AND THE SUBSEQUENT BICKERING AMONG THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS IN ROME AND ELSEWHERE. THE DC HAS NOT SHOWN ANY TALENT FOR GOVERNING NAPLES AND SEEMS TO BE HELL-BENT ON PREVENTING ANYONE ELSE FROM DOING IT. PRECLUDING A MIRACULOUS CHANGE IN THE COMPOSITION

OF THE DC LISTS, THE PARTY CANNOT HOPE TO RECAPTURE A MAJORITY POSITION. DISSIDENT DC COUNCILORS (14 OF A TOTAL OF 24) HAVE SUCCESS

- FULLY BROKEN THE GAVA FAMILY GRIP BUT IN THIS INSTANCE THEIR LEADER-
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SHIP AS WELL AS THE CALIBER OF THE COUNCILORS THEMSELVES IS NOT FORMIDABLE. THE SITUATION IS BETTER AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL WHICH HAS A CENTER-LEFT GIUNTA. A BRIGHT, ATTRACTIVE AND FORCEFUL CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT OF THE DEMITA FACTION IS PRESIDENT. HIS GIUNTA IS OPEN TO PCI PROPOSALS. THE PSI COULD ALTER THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT BUT THE EMERGING FEAR IN THE SOUTH OF BEING SWALLOWED UP BY THE COMMUNISTS WILL PROBABLY KEEP THEM ALIGNED WITH THE DC. UNQUOTE.

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